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**Summit spotlights access to care for children with special health care needs**

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** (May 25, 2016) – Stakeholders for children and youth with special health care needs convened today in Frankfort with a goal to strengthen the network that supports this group and their families.

Almost 100 doctors, public health specialists, insurers, child health care providers, state and federal government officials, family members and others attended the Kentucky Summit on Access to Care for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, cosponsored by the Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs (CCSHCN), part of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), the National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

Gov. Matt Bevin welcomed the group and told them their work would maintain and improve the lives of special kids with special needs. He also signed a proclamation making today “Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Awareness Day.”

“There is an absolute need for us to take care of these children,” said Gov. Bevin. “We owe them that as a society, as Kentuckians, as human beings. It’s our obligation. We are committed to transforming, in a positive, constructive, proactive and forward-thinking way, the services you provide. We truly are grateful for what you do day in and day out.”

CCSHCN Executive Director Jackie Richardson said the summit was part of a learning collaborative sponsored by several national groups, including NGA and NCSL.

“We wanted this summit to provide a national perspective on the access to care provided through the Commission,” she said. “With the group discussions we had today, we identified strategies to improve access to care and increase awareness of our programs.”

The summit included a legislative panel and state and national experts speaking on topics including behavioral health access, the impact of adverse childhood experiences and access to care through Medicaid.

CCSHCN serves children and youth with special health care needs — defined as those who have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond what is generally required.



CCSHCN has 12 offices and other provider sites across the state. Clinics help with conditions like otology, orthopedics, severe cleft lip and palate and cerebral palsy. It also has a growing neurology program and has introduced autism clinics to improve access to diagnostic and medical resources for families in the eastern and western regions of the state.

Richardson said the estimated 197,916 children and youth in Kentucky with special health care needs is a rate higher than the national average.

“While there is much more work to be done, we have accomplished a lot for our families and children” she said. “Many of them will need a lifetime of special care, and summits like today's help ensure they will have consistent, coordinated and comprehensive access for as long as they need it.”

For more information about CCSHCN programs and services, visit <http://chfs.ky.gov/ccshcn/>.

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*The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.*